United Nations S/PV.8154

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8154th meeting
Wednesday, 10 January 2018, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Umarov	(Kazakhstan)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kuwait	Mr. Almunayekh
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Tachco

Agenda

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Letter dated 8 December 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/1037)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2017/1117)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

18-00688 (E)

Accessible document Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53)

Letter dated 8 December 2017 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/1037)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2017/1117)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Colombia to participate in the meeting. On behalf of the Security Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Óscar Naranjo, Vice President of Colombia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/1037, which contains the text of a letter dated 8 December from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council, and document S/2017/1117, which contains the text of a report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

I now give the floor to Mr. Arnault.

Mr. Arnault: I thank the members of the Security Council for the opportunity to introduce to the first quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Verification Mission in Columbia (S/2017/1117), which began its operations on 26 September last year, following the completion of the agreement on the ceasefire, the cessation of hostilities and the laying down of arms.

Before going any further, let me say that it is a great pleasure to share the floor with Vice President Naranjo, who was a key actor during the protracted negotiations that brought the conflict between Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and the State to an end a little over a year ago. Since then he has been key to the implementation of the peace agreement. The Mission has been privileged to have him as an interlocutor since the beginning and he, together with the President, as well as the FARC, are to be credited for many of the achievements recorded in the Secretary-General's report against the difficult background in which the implementation process unfolds.

The Secretary-General's report was issued a couple of weeks ago in the middle of the holiday season, but I am glad to inform the Council early in the new year of follow-up on some of the measures adopted late last year. On 8 January, the Interior Minister convened the first meeting of the interagency body responsible for ensuring that the early warning by the Ombudsman's Office of impending violence against individuals or communities is quickly acted upon in accordance with an important decree issued on the 18 December.

On 5 January, the National Protection Unit — which, among other tasks, looks after the security of FARC members outside the training and reintegration areas — decided to establish additional protection teams in those areas so that a greater number of ex-combatants can travel safely outside those areas. The Council will recall that while no serious incidents took place in those training and reintegration areas as a result of protection measures by the security forces, the number of killings outside those areas has been a matter of growing concern in recent months. While there is no clear pattern behind those incidents, the increase in the number of protection measures is very appropriate.

Finally, the Council should also note that on President Santos' instructions, the disposal of FARC-EP arms caches has resumed, under the responsibility of the military and with the cooperation of former combatants of the FARC. The outcome is still modest, with approximately 60 caches. It will therefore be important that the operation continue in order to keep weapons out of the reach of illegal groups.

I stress that security in conflict zones must be enhanced because, as the Council is aware, an upsurge in violence in those areas in recent months, widely

acknowledged and condemned by the Government, civil society and the international community alike, has brought about several of the most significant developments noted in the Secretary-General's report. Among those, first and foremost, we stress the decision to proceed with the long-term deployment of security forces and about 600 of the more vulnerable rural districts in the areas most affected by the conflict, including the district where community leaders, human rights defenders, promoters of crop substitution and land restitution advocates were assassinated.

In our view, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of that decision. The control of the territory by the State is inseparable from the permanent physical presence of State institutions those areas. An occasional presence is bound to leave the old or new illegal power structures intact. Of course, the deployment of security forces is not a panacea. One of the specific objectives of such deployment is precisely to pave the way quickly for more proactive social and economic support by civilian State institutions.

The demands of the communities that have borne the burden of the war are simple, few and well known. They call for tertiary roads to break the isolation, health and education services and the titling of their land, without which integration into the legal economy is seriously hampered. That is the objective and we, along with the President and the Vice President, are convinced that the recovery of the zones of conflict, the reduction of violence against communities and their leaders and the long-term success of counter-narcotics efforts start with the stabilization programme undertaken last month. As outlined in the new plan, the Mission will regularly and carefully assess progress, together with the Government and the security forces. As mentioned in the report, we are making slight adjustments to our deployment to that effect.

While the building blocks of stabilization are being put in place, we cannot lose sight of the challenges of reintegration. The political reintegration of the former guerilla organization is on course in the context of the parliamentary and presidential elections this year. It is hoped that local and department elections in less than two years from now will be the opportunity to consolidate further the political integration of the new FARC political party, but we continue to view with concern the socioeconomic reintegration of the 14,000 former combatants.

We are fully aware of the challenges and we praise the efforts that have been made by Government agencies, the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace and the Agency for Reintegration and Normalization in relation to several reintegration measures referred to in the report. However, we must not forget that we are dealing with a large group of former fighters whose level of accumulated frustration with their reintegration process, illustrated by the number of members still in jail, is not easy to overcome All of us — Government, United Nations agencies, international community and civil society — must be diligent and thorough in our support for their reintegration and the development of communities in which they are inserted.

The President has taken the important step of recognizing the need for access to landownership as a major incentive for reintegration and as a staple of many reintegration processes. For their part, many FARC members have demonstrated on the ground that they are willing and able to engage in agriculture, environmental protection and crop substitution. Those are promising developments — but only that. The next few months must be the opportunity to turn the corner and establish what continues to be a fragile process upon a more durable foundation.

Let me now turn briefly to the temporary ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). A few weeks ago, and even more so today, we would have liked to be in a position to make recommendations with regard to the Mission's involvement in the supervision of the ceasefire beyond 9 January. We are not yet in that position. The ELN voiced very strong reservations concerning the implementation of the temporary ceasefire and the humanitarian commitments attached to it. Although the ELN leadership has proposed negotiating a firmer ceasefire, they have remained, until only recently, silent on their posture following the temporary ceasefire's expiration yesterday. Barely 24 hours have elapsed since the two delegations resumed their discussions in Quito, and it is therefore perhaps a little too early to venture estimating what the future holds for the long-term in terms of negotiations.

In the country, the call for the continued suspension of military action has been unanimous, notwithstanding the many imperfections of the ceasefire. Social organizations, members of academia, the private sector and local authorities hailing from various regions have called on both parties to maintain the ceasefire. In a

statement issued the day before yesterday, and in line with the appeal contained in the Secretary-General's report, the Mission and the Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church, who were invited as members of the ceasefire monitoring mechanism, stressed the need to maintain the reduced levels of violence that have prevailed over the past three months.

We had hoped that the talks in Quito would have delivered an outcome consistent with those aspirations, and we would have suggested allowing some — but not too much — time for the Secretary-General to make his recommendations to the Council based on those discussions. Unfortunately, it was just announced only a few minutes ago that ELN attacks against pipelines have just resumed. We will follow developments closely in that regard, and keep the Council informed.

In conclusion, let me convey to the Council the following.

First, there is a conviction that, at the highest level of the Colombian Government and within the leadership of the FARC, the commitment remains to moving forward with the peace process regardless of the many difficulties that have been in evidence — and sometimes dramatically so — during the past few months. Much is still needed to keep the process on track and make it stronger, but, with such political will, the appropriate resources and a sustained effort, much can be accomplished.

Secondly, although the outcome of peace negotiations has generated controversy and divisions, and continues to do so to an extent, building peace is a project for which its constituency goes beyond the signatories. We see that in the efforts of many from local authorities to universities, the private sector and civil society, who are eager to partake in opportunities offered by the peace process. The recent meetings held by the commission on truth, coexistence and non-repetition, under the inspiring leadership of Father Francisco de Roux, with prominent representatives of the private sector, victims, civil society and the high-command of the army, are one of many examples of the broader ownership that the process of peacebuilding is developing.

Lastly, let me reiterate the conviction that in these promising and trying times, the unanimous support of the Council, and through it, that of the international community remain a great source of encouragement, resilience and strength.

The President: I thank Mr. Arnault for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Security Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Let me extend a very warm welcome to Vice-President Naranjo. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Vice-President and, through him, to President Santos Calderón for their tireless commitments to peace in Columbia. I also thank Jean Arnault, for his briefing and presentation of the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General (S/2017/1117) detailing the progress that has been made under the mandates of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. I commend him and his team for their continued efforts both in supporting the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peacebetween the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Government of Colombia and, more recently, in participating in the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism for the ceasefire by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN).

The courage and diligence of both parties have allowed many positive steps to take place since the Peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC was signed. More than 11,000 FARC members have registered with the United Nations, and are now beginning their reintegration into civilian life. The new political party — the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común — will be able to participate in Colombia's elections this year, and the FARC has handed over its last caches of weapons to the United Nations. Those are remarkable achievements, but we are now getting to the hardest part. Much work remains to be done. As President Santos Calderón said in Cartagena last week, less than 10 per cent of the time set out for the peace agreement to be delivered has passed.

We welcome the continued commitment of both parties to achieve a sustainable peace. We encourage them to continue to work together to overcome the challenges, which are only to be expected following more than 50 years of conflict. As we just heard, those challenges include increasing levels of violence in some areas affected by the conflict and the killing of human rights defenders and former FARC members. I share the concerns that the Secretary-General mentioned in his report, and I therefore welcome the important steps taken by the Colombian Government to tackle them. They include the establishment of a more permanent

and visible presence by the police and security forces, a strengthened early warning system and a renewed focus on investigations by the Office of the Prosecutor. Security must be established in those areas to allow communities to realize the full benefits of the Peace Agreement. I also welcome come the Government's commitment to addressing the issue of access to land for former FARC combatants. All those steps taken together are a clear signal of the Government's commitment to implementation.

Looking ahead, I encourage the Government to Columbia to maintain its focus on adopting the remaining peace legislation through Congress. An early ruling by the Constitutional Court on amendments made to some key laws will be important to maintaining momentum. That includes the ruling on amendments to the special jurisdiction for peace, which are vital to making progress in the transitional justice system. I had hoped that today we would be discussing the announcement of a renewed ceasefire between the Government and the ELN. Instead, I am concerned and disappointed by the recent news that the ELN has broken its ceasefire and squandered the chance of bringing about sustained peace. I urge both sides to work together to find a way of avoiding further civilian suffering.

President Santos Calderón, together with Columbia's leaders, took a bold step in coming to the Security Council for help in 2016. Our support for a sustained peace in Colombia will not waver, and, as Columbia holds elections later this year and goes through political change as all democracies do, it is important to remember that the Peace Agreement belongs to all Colombians, not to any specific Government. The United Kingdom will continue to encourage focus on and commitment to the peace process to bring about real lasting change. That process is unique and will continue to inspire us for years to come, as it has inspired me during all of my time in the Security Council.

This is my final scheduled public statement in the Security Council. I am very pleased to be able to finish my time in New York with a meeting on Colombia — one of our greatest success stories. I wish that all the conflicts that we work on could achieve the peace that has been achieved in Colombia. It is essential that we learn the lessons of that success and apply them to the countless other issues on our agenda, which, frankly, could do with a little bit of that success.

As I leave this role, I want to thank all members of the Security Council with which I have shared this horseshoe table in this famous Chamber and all of their predecessors. I thank them for their cooperation, their insights and all their support over the past nearly three years. I should also like to thank everyone who works for the United Nations, be it here in New York or around the world. I have been continually impressed by their expertise and fortitude. They really are the unsung heroes of the Organization.

Finally, I should like to thank my own team at the United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations, which has supported me with skill, expertise and dedication. I wish all of them the very best for the future.

The President: I thank the representative of the United Kingdom for his committed and brilliant work in the Council.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is grateful for the convening of this informative meeting on the situation in Colombia and the briefing by Mr. Jean Arnault on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We especially welcome the participation of Vice-President Oscar Naranjo and, through him, convey our gratitude to President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón and his Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Mejía Vélez.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm Peru's commitment to the peace process in the sisterly Republic of Colombia — a commitment based on a shared history and vision of the future, and active cooperation aimed at sustaining peace and the development of our peoples.

We highlight once again the example that the Colombian peace process offers to the international community and to strengthening Latin America and the Caribbean as a zone of peace. Peru expresses its appreciation to the Colombian people and Government, as well as to the various parties involved in the process, their authorities and leaders, for their courage and determination and for having placed the supreme value of peace above all their differences. It is obviously a complex process that faces many challenges at this stage of implementation — no doubt more complex than the previous one — but it looks to the future with hope and conviction that sustaining peace is inseparable from sustainable development. With respect to the latest developments, we want to share the following comments:

Peru supports the comprehensive strategy based on a preventive approach, led by the Government in partnership with local authorities and civil society, to mitigate the factors of risk and vulnerability. In that sense, we highlight the efforts to address organized crime in rural areas formerly controlled by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), within the rule of law and in full respect for human rights.

The laying-down of arms has undoubtedly been a milestone in the peace process. We welcome the efforts of the national authorities aimed at the full implementation of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace so as to minimize the cases of dissidence of the former militants of the FARC. At this stage of the process, we highlight the actions of the Office of the Prosecutor and the importance of the measures adopted by the Government to guarantee the security of all citizens, particularly in the framework of the National Protection Unit and the implementation of the new Horus plan. It is of the utmost importance to prevent and avoid the occurrence of further deaths of social leaders, human rights defenders and former members of the FARC.

We agree with Mr. Arnault that reintegration constitutes a guarantee to prevent the perpetuation of the conflict. In that regard, we consider that the reconversion of the FARC to legal political life and the accreditations granted by the High Commissioner for Peace, with the guarantees that have been provided and other support, are key aspects of the process that undoubtedly require the tolerance and commitment of all Colombian society, which are supported and underwritten by all countries, in particular the members of the Council.

Along the same lines, we value the efforts of national authorities to promote access to land and productive projects in rural areas. These measures go beyond the commitments assumed in the Peace Agreement and complement other reintegration mechanisms and training programes offered by the Government with a view to achieving sustainable peace.

We wish to conclude by welcoming the open, transparent and inclusive way in which the Colombian peace process is being conducted, with the support of the international community. We also welcome the united commitment of the Council, which, at the request of the parties, has monitored the process from its origins, as well as the important work carried out by the Verification Mission in that regard.

From our Latin American perspective, we would also like to acknowledge the work accomplished on this topic by Ambassador Elbio Rosselli Frieri of Uruguay, under whose presidency of the Security Council a visit to Colombia was organized. We also pay tribute to the role played by Ambassador Mattew Rycroft of the United Kingdom on this issue.

As a non-permanent member that only recently joined the Security Council, Peru reiterates its full support for the authorities and the people of Colombia in the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Jean Arnault, for his briefing this morning, and assure him that we continue to support his efforts and the work of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

I would also like to welcome the presence of the Vice-President of Colombia, Mr. Óscar Naranjo, with us here today. I thank him for his personal dedication and the key role he has played and continues to play for peace in Colombia.

(*spoke in English*)

Over a year has now passed since the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace was ratified by the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the conflict came to an end. However, ensuring that peace is sustained requires a continuous effort. We commend the political courage and strong commitment to peace of both parties, and their efforts to overcome challenges in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. Last year saw the successful laying down of arms and the conversion of the FARC-Ejercito del Pueblo into a political party. These were truly historic achievements. The security and reintegration of former combatants will mark the next milestone in the journey to consolidate a sustainable peace.

The increasing number of incidents of intimidation, reprisals and killings of human rights defenders, community leaders, FARC members and their families continues to be worrisome and underscores the need for the State to fill the power vacuum and safeguard the rule of law. We welcome the updated stabilization plan

as one measure to address that, and look forward to its speedy implementation.

A redoubled and sustained effort is now needed on the part of all parts of the State, in support of the wider Peace Agreement, including comprehensive rural reform, so that it can rapidly deliver tangible peace dividends for all Colombians. The development of a national reintegration plan would be key in that regard by providing a renewed impetus and ensuring coherence among all actors and initiatives. At this critical time in the implementation of the agreement, the United Nations and Colombia's international partners must lend our full support to the parties, and engage proactively to assist them in reaching their goals.

We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the work of the Mission on the inclusion and participation of women. We welcome the gender-sensitive analysis in the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/1117). Women's meaningful involvement in the ongoing reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts is essential to attaining long-term peace and stability. In that regard, we see Colombia as serving as a model.

Finally, we note the positive impact on the humanitarian situation of the temporary ceasefire between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). We regret that the ELN has resumed attacks and urge it to renew its ceasefire commitment as soon as possible, and we reiterate that the United Nations and the Security Council must stand ready to assist the parties in monitoring a new agreement. Sweden, as a member of the Grupo de países de apoyo, acompañamiento y cooperación a la Mesa de conversaciones, will assist the process as much as it can.

The Colombian Peace Agreement represents the culmination of an historic process, which brought more than 50 years of conflict and violence to an end. It shows that through political courage and leadership, through dialogue and diplomacy and with supportive regional involvement, even the most entrenched conflicts can be brought to an end, setting an irreversible course for peace. The agreement also acts as a basis for the wider economic and social reforms that will benefit the entire country and all Colombians. It is a visionary ambition and it seems in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and how it connects to the sustaining peace agenda. By remaining committed to the peace agreement, the parties are keeping faith with the hopes and aspirations of the Colombian people for the future of their country. It also bridges divisions inside the country. We must therefore continue to do all we can to support them.

Finally, I would like to say to my dear friend, Matthew Rycroft, how much we will miss him. We appreciate his contribution to this dossier, but also his efforts on so many other issues that the Council has been dealing with. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his comprehensive briefing this morning. I would also like to acknowledge the presence of the Vice-President of Colombia, Mr. Naranjo — a key player in the peace process. We thank him for honouring us with his presence and for his personal commitment to the implementation of the peace agreement.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a close neighbour of Colombia — as Aruba and Curaçao are off the coast of Colombia and are autonomous countries in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In view of that good-neighbourly relationship, the Kingdom of the Netherlands has politically supported the peace process in Colombia from the start, and we will continue to do so. We are also providing financial support for the implementation of the peace agreement.

Before going into the issue of Colombia, I would also like to acknowledge that this is the last meeting of my good friend and neighbour, Matthew Rycroft. I honour the contribution he has made to peace and security in the world through all of his activities on the Council. We will miss him.

Today, I will address three issues — the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, some of the challenges and the ceasefire.

First, with regard to the Peace Agreement, the Kingdom of the Netherlands commends the historic peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). We pay tribute to the achievements of both parties in the peace process. They are remarkable. The peace process is not only about Colombia; it gives hope to many people in many other regions of the world that are torn up by war. Our financial support

to the implementation of the peace agreement focuses on human rights and gender, transitional justice, democratization and land rights.

We thank the Secretary General for his report (S/2017/1117). It contains a clear and realistic overview of the results of the Mission and the progress of the implementation of the peace agreement in general.

That brings me to my second point — remaining challenges and achievements. Of course, the full implementation of the Peace Agreement is key. However difficult it may seem, challenges need to be confronted and dealt with without delay. Only the full commitment to peace by all parties can overcome the challenges that Colombia still faces. A solid national reintegration plan is necessary to make the political, economic and social reintegration of former combatants into society a reality. We hope both parties will be creative in finding ways to give demobilized ex-FARC-members access to land. In that regard, we very much welcome the recent steps of President Santos.

We would also like to stress the important dimension of gender. Given the important role that women have played in the peace process, they should also be able to participate fully in the drafting and implementation of the reintegration plan. The participation of women has proven to be effective and it is crucial to the success of the reintegration plan as well.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is concerned about the security situation in certain regions and the increase in violence against human rights defenders, community leaders and former combatants. Therefore, we welcome the redesign of Plan Victoria into Plan Horus, which includes the national police and focuses more on areas where the security situation is most critical. We welcome the first steps taken by the Colombian Government to set up a transitional justice system and we look forward to the full implementation of chapter 5 of the peace agreement. In order to reach sustainable and lasting peace, impunity should be put to an end and reparations and guarantees of non-repetition to the 8 million victims should be ensured.

On the ceasefire, we deeply regret the fact that negotiations have been unable to reach an agreement on an extension of the ceasefire. This morning's two attacks took place shortly after the ending of the ceasefire. It would be unfortunate if these attack were the consequence of the decision by the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional) to resume its actions against the Colombian Government. As a member of the group of countries supporting the negotiating table of the peace negotiations between the Colombian Government and the ELN, we call upon both parties to renew the ceasefire. The first ceasefire has greatly improved the humanitarian situation in areas affected by the conflict. A renewal of the ceasefire is in the best interest of the Colombian people and is a necessary precondition for the full participation of civil society in the peace negotiations.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

In conclusion, as a neighbouring country, the Kingdom of the Netherlands remains fully committed to the Colombian peace process and is ready to support the Colombian Government in the implementation of the agreements. We face significant challenges, but we are convinced that the peace process is irreversible.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I too would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his briefing, as well as the Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, Mr. Óscar Naranjo, for participating in today's meeting. I also thank them for the negotiations and the implementation of the peace agreement reached with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC).

Despite various obstacles, the Colombian Government has been able, over a few years, to launch an historic peace agreement with the FARC that France also believes to be irreversible. This is an agreement that the United Nations in general and the Security Council in particular have supported. After the disarmament and the political transition of that armed group, we have, for a few months, been involved in a crucial phase for the future of the process — the reintegration of ex-combatants.

In the light of the mandate conferred by the Council on the second United Nations mission to Colombia, I would insist on three points.

First and above all, we welcome the mobilization in recent months of the Colombian Government in order to adopt the necessary legislation to implement the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, especially with regard to Special Jurisdiction for peace. We hope that the jurisdiction will have ways to ensure and authorize equitable and independent justice, in keeping with the

commitments undertaken when the peace agreement was signed. Whatever the results of the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections, France calls on all Colombian political actors to embark upon that path.

My second point concerns security assurances. Although former FARC combatants are relatively well protected within the areas of training and reintegration, France regrets an increase in violence in territories previously under the control of the guerilla forces, particularly directed at human rights defenders and civil society representatives. France welcomes the new measures announced by the Colombian authorities prioritizing the fight against that negative trend.

Finally, France wishes to stress a key issue for reintegration and the future of the peace process and welcomes the action of President Santos in that regard — access to land and income sources. We do not underestimate the difficulty of this question. However, it clearly constitutes the key to successful economic and social reintegration of former fighters and to the pacification and lasting stability of territories plagued by half a century of conflict.

In conclusion, I would just like to note that the peace Agreement between the Government of Colombia and the FARC has taken place in the arc of history. Its implementation can encourage other armed groups, led by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), to follow suit. In this regard, France hopes that the temporary ceasefire between the Colombian Government and the ELN will be promptly renewed and that the negotiations can help to deliver a historic peace agreement.

Finally, I to would like to commend Ambassador Rycroft and his dynamism in the Council. I wish him every success in his new functions at the head of the Department for International Development.

Ms. Tachco (United States of America): Like my colleagues, I would like to offer a very special welcome to Vice-President Naranjo. His work on the peace process in Colombia really is part of history and we are very honoured to have him in the Chamber with us today. I also thank Special Representative Arnault for his and his team's outstanding work to support a lasting peace in Colombia.

As we enter the second year of the historic Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a stable and Long Lasting Peace, we look back at the progress both sides have made in bringing peace to the Colombian people. Before 2016, a majority of Colombians had never lived in a country at peace. All of that changed with the signing of the peace agreement, which brought Latin America's longest war to a close. The Peace Agreement was hailed as a huge success and indeed it was. Colombia became the country that defeated kidnappers and cocaine kingpins and stepped back from the brink of becoming a failed State.

Colombia now faces the immense task of securing the peace and consolidating these gains. In the past year, significant progress has been achieved in one key aspect of the peace accord: disarmament. Nearly 7,000 members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) were relocated to United Nations-monitored disarmament zones and the FARC has transitioned into a political party. Rebels have turned in their weapons and the homicide rate is at its lowest level in four decades. These are visible and concrete signs of progress that benefit all Colombians. But as the past year has shown, ending the war was just the beginning. Colombia is now working to establish the justice that is necessary to preserve the peace. Colombian President Santos Calderón himself has said, "Constructing peace is more than ending the attacks and much more difficult".

The implementation of the peace agreement has turned to political reconciliation and reintegration. Colombia must balance demands for justice with the need for reconciliation to ensure that peace endures and that means the taking on the hard work of securing proper accountability for those responsible for violations and building trust among a people deeply scarred by decades of conflict.

A particular concern is the security vacuum left by the FARC demobilization. The lack of security in formerly FARC-controlled areas, as well as the lack of governance, has led to an up-tick in violence that is very worrisome. New armed groups are battling to fill the space left by the FARC, and there have been continuing attacks on community leaders and human rights defenders.

We welcome the Colombian Government's efforts to expand its presence in former conflict areas to keep paramilitary and illicit groups from replacing the FARC as sources of killing and violence. Effective military and civilian agencies that provide security and Government services in remote areas are critical

to sustaining peace. Meanwhile, the reintegration of FARC combatants into Colombian society is also very crucial. As a number of former FARC soldiers have left the rural camps where they were expected to begin their transition back to civilian life, it is urgent for Colombia to execute a reintegration plan that provides both security for the Colombian people and opportunities for former combatants.

We have also seen some legislative progress, as others have noted, including the approval of the law regulating the Special Jurisdiction for peace, and we hope to see the implementation of other key provisions. The United States is fully committed to supporting Colombia and the implementation of the peace accord. We would also like to echo the disappointment of others about the resumption of attacks by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, as we saw this morning, and we hope that a new ceasefire can be concluded in the coming days.

We will continue to be a friend and partner to Colombia. We will continue to support security, justice, prosperity and respect for human rights of all Colombians. The people of Colombia know better than most that peace is precious, but fragile. We stand shoulder to shoulder with them in working to preserve this peace and build a better future for Colombia.

I must join my colleagues in thanking Ambassador Rycroft for his service on the Security Council. Ambassador Haley asked me to present this statement to him in front of the Council this morning. It has been a real pleasure and an honour working with him. I think that we all got a little bit choked up during his remarks. We will all miss him very much.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having kindly agreed to convene this important briefing on the situation in Colombia. This is a major concern for all members of our Council.

Before I continue, I would like to hail the presence of His Excellency the Vice-President of Colombia in the Chamber and welcome him to the Security Council. We congratulate Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jean Arnault on the excellent briefing he just gave us, which affords us a clearer picture of the peace process under way in Colombia. We would also like to thank him and encourage him in the light of the tremendous work undertaken by the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

Côte d'Ivoire joins its voice with those of previous speakers in welcoming the remarkable progress that has been achieved in the peace process uunder way in Colombia. This progress is especially reflected in the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a stable and Long Lasting Peace of November, 2016 and the effective disarmament of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and its transformation into a political party. It is also reflected with the ceasefire reached between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). We further commend the determination of the various parties to work to achieve peace and national reconciliation.

Notwithstanding these gains, Côte d'Ivoire remains troubled by the delays observed in the implementation of certain relevant provisions of the Peace Agreement, specifically the political, economic and social reintegration of the FARC and the implementation of the necessary reforms to improve the living conditions for people in the areas of Colombia that have been plagued by war — people who aspire to better lives.

Côte d'Ivoire deplores the relapse into insecurity, violence and myriad forms of trafficking in the areas previously occupied by the FARC. Criminal groups and militias are now vying for control of these areas. My delegation further notes that the numerous murders of social leaders and the observed return of former FARC combatants to the areas they previously occupied, which is the result of their lack of prospects, compound the situation in Colombia. We are convinced that peace and security are prerequisites for all harmonious and sustainable development, and we call upon all Colombian stakeholders to commit themselves further to the political process under way. All parties must assume their responsibilities and obligations.

My delegation welcomes the tremendous efforts already undertaken by the Government of Colombia in implementing the Peace Agreement, and we encourage it to persevere in order to ensure the success of this process through tangible measures and the implementation of the structures set up within this framework. In that regard, the next parliamentary and presidential elections, in March and May, should strengthen the national reconciliation process and guarantee genuine peace, by ensuring adequate security conditions for all participants. Peace can be sustainable and lasting only if the reconciliation process is inclusive and involves all Colombians.

My delegation urges the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional to continue their negotiations with a view to a swift renewal of the ceasefire as part of a comprehensive peace agreement. We regret the fact that they have violated the ceasefire, according to the most recent reports available to us.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the readiness of my country, which has emerged from a decade of crisis thanks to the support of the United Nations and the international community, to do its part, with all other members of the Council, for the success of the peace process in Colombia.

Finally, allow me personally to thank the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, my friend Matthew Rycroft, for the friendship and the support that he has willingly afforded our delegation since our arrival here in New York. He is leaving us, but I believe that his spirit will continue to support us. We wish him well in his new responsibilities.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): Let me start by thanking Mr. Jean Arnault for a very informative briefing. As well, I thank him and his team for their dedication and commitment in helping Colombia to bring about peace and reconciliation. He has our full support for his efforts aimed at accomplishing the objectives of the United Nations Mission in Colombia. I am also very pleased to welcome Mr. Óscar Naranjo, Vice-President of Colombia.

It has been more than a year since the signing and entry into force of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). We are happy to see that the peace process has brought about tangible positive results. Poland welcomes resolution 2381 (2017), which expanded the scope of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We believe that the role of the United Nations Mission is critical to the next phase of the implementation of the peace agenda, especially the reintegration process of FARC combatants and the verification of the temporary bilateral ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional.

A proper reintegation remains key in order to guarantee that conflict does not reoccur and to ensure a successful political, economic and social integration of the members of the FARC. We would like to stress the importance of the participation of women in the political process. Durable peace can be achieved only when all people — women and men — are equally involved in the formulation of a solution — which, after all, affects their lives.

The Monitoring and Verification Mechanism played an essential role in maintaining the trust between the Government and the FARC. We believe that it should serve as a model for conflict resolution in other conflict-affected areas. The success of the peace process in Colombia remains essential for the region of Latin America. However, it also serves as an example of the positive involvement of the Security Council and a much-needed success story of a United Nations-brokered peace deal. Intense political will is still required on both sides in order to drive the peace process forward. We strongly believe that the parties will remain united in their desire to bring about a brighter future for all the citizens of Colombia.

Poland would like to underline the role of the United Nations Mine Action Service through its programme in Columbia, aimed at ending the suffering of Colombians from widespread landmines. Last year, driven by the outstanding work done by the United Nations Mission in Columbia, Poland decided to contribute to the multi-year appeal of the Department of Political Affairs. We hope that that donation will also help with preventive efforts in Colombia. We are also confident that we, as the international community, will spare no effort to provide assistance for lasting peace to be achieved in Columbia.

In conclusion, allow me to join my colleagues in congratulating Ambassador Matthew Rycroft. Poland has been a member of the Security Council for only 10 days, but I can say that I am truly impressed by his professionalism and his very constructive spirit. I express my greatest appreciation.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia wishes, first of all, to pay tribute to the presence of Mr. Óscar Naranjo, Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, and to welcome him to the Chamber. We also thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Colombia, for sharing with the Council the first quarterly report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2017/1117). I also wish to welcome the presence of the many Ambassadors from Latin America and the

Caribbean who are here with us at this meeting. Their presence clearly demonstrates the commitment of Latin America and the Caribbean to this peace process.

In the various conflicts that figure on the agenda of the Security Council, we greatly regret the fact that there have been political processes under way for years without showing any tangible progress and peace agreements that are ignored or are not really implemented. Colombia provides us with a different reality. Of course, that does not mean that there have not been difficulties along the way — there have — but the goodwill and leadership shown by the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in implementing the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace is something that we would like to see in other conflicts. That same conviction is needed to overcome the difficulties that exist, or that will arise in future.

We are starting a new year, and it is always worth evaluating the cycle that has been completed. The year 2017 was the year of peace in Colombia. That process brought about positive news and demonstrated concrete progress for the Security Council and the international community. The agreement reached by the Government and the FARC represents a tremendous achievement by Colombians, which fills the entire region of Latin America and the Caribbean with pride.

Thanks to that agreement, 53 years of armed conflict came to an end. The FARC laid down their weapons, became the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común and exchanged arms for political participation. Those three specific facts are easy to say, but those of us who are aware the suffering of the Colombian people during that half-century know the value of every minute step that was taken and the effort and cost involved in laying the foundations for peacebuilding. Only those three facts make that process irreversible.

Three months ago, the most complicated stage in the implementation of the Final Agreement began — the political, economic and social reintegration of the ex-combatants of FARC into society, in accordance with points 3.2 and 3.4 of the agreement. That stage is facing difficulties, but should not stop or diminish the significance of the progress made in implementing the Agreement.

Colombia has adopted 107 laws and decrees on reinstatement and security guarantees, on the victims, and on truth, justice and reparation. It has established dozens of institutions and specialized mechanisms and development plans. The support of the international community is paramount. For their part, the United Nations and the Security Council must continue to support this process every step of the way and work to maintain peace. But of course it is Colombians who should be the main defenders of the process. The difference between now and previous attempts is that the Government and the FARC are getting real results.

Given all of this, the Plurinational State of Bolivia believes that we should first redouble our efforts to ensure the reintegration of former FARC combatants into civilian life, starting with the legal reinstatement that is the foundation needed for achieving political, social and economic reinstatement, as established in the Final Agreement. Secondly, security should be strengthened in the areas formerly occupied by the FARC. The latest figures for murders of social leaders and former FARC members are alarming, and we should move faster to establish measures that will ensure a Government presence and protection for residents of those areas. Thirdly, concrete steps must be taken to advance comprehensive rural reforms. In our view, formalizing access to land is fundamental to ensuring stable and lasting peace. With regard to the negotiations with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), we regret the fact that the process has been suspended, and we hope and call for the talks to be resumed as soon as possible.

In conclusion, we would like to highlight the efforts of Special Representative Jean Arnault and his team. Their commitment has been proven both in the implementation of the Final Agreement between the Government and the FARC and in their own work in pursuing talks with the ELN. We would also like to express our special gratitude to three Ambassadors who are in this Chamber today: Ambassador Rosselli Frieri, of Uruguay — not just for his leadership in the work of the United Nations Mission in Colombia but also for his commitment to the issue — Ambassador Rycroft, of the United Kingdom, for his role in the Council's special mission in Colombia, and Ambassador Mejía Vélez, who has been a pillar of the peace process. We would also like to reiterate Bolivia's total support to the peace process led by the Government and FARC. The determination shown both by President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC's leaders in consolidating peace will go down in history as one of the most important decisions that the Colombian people have ever taken.

The peace they are building belongs to Colombia, but it also belongs to, and is the responsibility of, the whole of the human family.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this discussion. We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Naranjo Trujillo, Vice-President of Colombia, and we are grateful to Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. We believe it is important to receive updated information in a timely manner from the source.

In the year since the signing of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), the situation in Colombia has shown positive momentum. The main achievements have unquestionably been the completion of the process of the rebels' surrender of their arms, the transformation of the FARC into a political party and the agreement on a temporary ceasefire with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. We firmly believe that the main reason for those achievements has been Colombians' declared national responsibility for their peace process. With regard to the agreement with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, we hope that the Colombian side will show the necessary political will and take decisions as soon as possible that will enable the Council to renew the corresponding mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

In general, we share the the Secretary-General's assessments in his recent report on the situation in the country (S/2017/1117). However, we do have some comments to make.

We would like to draw attention to a paragraph in the report about the security situation in various parts of the country. The information refers not only to the police and other national bodies, but also to the data of some non-governmental organizations. We would like an explanation as to why this information is not presented as coming from the Secretary-General. The same paragraph indicates that the data provided by non-governmental organizations is consistent with information in the possession of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, but the Security Council did not request data from that body.

That is concerned more with organizational issues. With regard to the situation in Colombia, the Secretary-General's report suggests that there are signs that the main task — the disarming of the FARC — has already been accomplished. We consider that to be an extremely dangerous delusion, especially in the absence of an agreement with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. Colombia will not succeed in achieving a durable peace until every segment of society is satisfied with the situation. Needless to say, on that front, we support the work of the Verification Mission, which is now focusing on just that — ensuring that Bogotá fulfils its obligations. Those efforts should be intensified, especially in the run-up to the forthcoming elections.

Mr. Almunayekh (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would first like to thank Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, for his valuable briefing, in which he informed us of the most important achievements and challenges facing the peace process and ceasefire in Colombia.

I also welcome His Excellency Mr. Óscar Adolfo Naranjo Trujillo, Vice President of Colombia, to the Security Council. His presence here today is in itself a testament to his Government's interest in achieving stable and lasting peace in Colombia and a confirmation to the Council of the importance that the Colombian Government attaches to that peace. I also thank and acknowledge his important and vital role in the current peace process in Colombia.

Regarding the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace, we take this opportunity to praise the significant achievements realized since it was signed by the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), ending a conflict that had lasted more than half a century. Meanwhile, we emphasize the importance of ensuring that both sides continue to honour their commitments.

After 50 years of conflict, achieving peace will face difficulties and obstacles. We welcome the temporary bilateral ceasefire between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), which expired yesterday, 9 March, and which has facilitated a number of achievements on several fronts, as acknowledged by both parties, the Catholic Church and the United Nations Mission, including a significant reduction in armed clashes between Government forces and those of the ELN, bringing with it a reduction in the level of violence and improvements in the humanitarian

situation. We have also seen the participation of a wide group of social organizations in public meetings with a view to convening a national dialogue in the future.

However, we are concerned about reports received this morning, indicating that the ELN has resumed fighting after the expiry of the ceasefire deadline. We urge both parties to extend it and to put the best interests of Colombia and the Colombian people first. We support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission be renewed to ensure the continuation of the ceasefire between the Government and the ELN, in view of the Mission's important role in achieving stability in the interests of the Colombian peace process.

In this regard, I thank the countries that have contributed international observers; Cuba and Norway, the two guarantors of the peace process; and the two supporting countries, Chile and Venezuela, as well as Colombia, for their vital and important role in sponsoring the ceasefire negotiations. We reiterate our commitment to continuing to support the Colombian Government, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Mission in their endeavours to bring peace to Colombia.

Finally, I wish the Ambassador of the United Kingdom, Matthew Rycroft, every success in the new role that awaits him.

Mr. Shen Bo (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks you, Mr. President, for having convened today's meeting. We listened carefully to the briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault, and I welcome Vice-President Naranjo to today's meeting.

The Colombia peace process is a good example of an instance in which the Council's cooperation has made a difference in addressing hotspot regional issues. This peace process is of the utmost importance for peace and development in Colombia and of great relevance for the maintenance of regional stability. China commends the efforts made by the Colombian Government and President Santos Calderón in this connection.

The full implementation of the final Peace Agreement between the Government and the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) is at the core of the Colombian peace process. The implementation of the peace agreement is currently facing challenges that are due to complex factors. After half a century of conflict and strife in the country, healing the wounds left by war will not be an easy task. The full implementation of the agreement encompasses political, security, development and social integration aspects. It is akin to a systematic engineering project and requires sustained efforts on the part of Colombia and the international community.

There is a high degree of consensus among different sectors in Colombia and on the part of the international community that the peace process there is irreversible. China is confident that the Government and FARC will be able to overcome the current difficulties and work towards the same goal, staying the course in the peace process so as to create conditions favourable to the full implementation of the Agreement by the Colombian Government and FARC and maintain the current positive momentum.

China also hopes that the Security Council and the international community will continue to focus on and support the peace process in Colombia, respect the leadership of the Colombian Government and people of the process, and provide constructive assistance to help along the way.

China commends Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia for the important role they have played in this connection. We hope that the Mission will continue to enhance contacts and communication with the Government and FARC and make greater efforts to enhance trust and dispel doubts.

With a view to promoting the implementation of the agreement by the Government and FARC, China also hopes that the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army) will overcome the current difficulties and reach agreement without delay on an extension of the ceasefire.

China is ready, together with other members of the Council, to continue to play its role in promoting the peace process in Colombia and to achieve comprehensive peace and stability in that country at an early date.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): Let me join others in expressing our thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault for his briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (S/2017/1117).

I am pleased to welcome the Vice-President of a country that is, despite the well-known challenges, on

the cusp of making history in peacemaking. We wish him success; we need that success as an example. Colombia has indeed been the good news in the Council, and we all have been applauding the remarkable achievement made by the country in turning the page on a long-standing conflict.

As we have come to understand, and as stressed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, there are formidable challenges in terms of implementation that require patience and perseverance to achieve sustainable peace. We have always known that the road ahead would be difficult and complex, and that it would not be a cakewalk.

We certainly welcome the positive progress made over the past year, including the laying down of arms, which was successfully completed just a few months ago and represented a significant milestone in the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

However, we are conscious of the fact that there are sensitive issues that need to be handled carefully, including the reintegration of Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC) combatants into civilian life; the implementation of personal and collective security and protection measures in the absence, or with an inadequate presence, of State institutions in places left by FARC combatants; and other issues highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General that might potentially create political complications.

We take note of the approval of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the backbone of the Peace Agreement, on 30 November. We are convinced that the approval of the Agreement alleviates the concerns of former combatants and facilitates their reintegration into society.

The Constitutional Court's endorsement of the Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition, on 14 November, as well as FARC's registration as a legal political party and its announcement that it would participate in the 2018 presidential and congressional elections, are very significant. While we commend the continued political will being demonstrated by the Government and FARC, we understand that more needs to be done in order to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement and sustain the gains made in the first phase of the peace process.

We note that the parties are committed to addressing this challenge, and they can only be encouraged to stay the course. The Council should continue to provide all of the necessary support, and we remain fully committed to supporting the Colombian parties in the implementation of their Agreement.

On the ceasefire agreement between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army) ,we can only hope that things will improve for the better despite the latest setback. We know how strongly the Government is committed in this regard.

We express our appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault and to United Nations personnel in Colombia for all their efforts in support of the Peace Agreement. We also reiterate our appreciation to the countries of the region and other international partners that continue to closely support and accompany the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

Finally, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the full implementation of the Colombian Peace Agreement and continue to stand in solidarity with the people and the Government of Colombia in their efforts to transition to a sustainable peace.

I want to stress how critical the success of this process is, not only for the people of Colombia but for us all, particularly for those of us in parts of the world where we have the major challenge of keeping the guns silent. Colombia should continue to serve as an example. For that to happen, it is important that nothing happen to dim the hopes that have been engendered, which we had the opportunity to witness during the Security Council mission last May.

I want to conclude by taking this opportunity to express profound appreciation to Matthew for his friendship and for the notable contribution he has made to the work of the Council. As everybody knows, with Matthew one can always be sure about the position he takes, and therefore one can always count on him, as we have. I am personally indebted to him for all of that. I wish him success as he assumes a responsibility back home that is in no way less important than the responsibility he has had as the representative of his country on the Council. He will be missed very much, and I share the sentiment expressed by the representative of the United States in that regard.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to preface my remarks by extending a very warm and cordial welcome to the Vice-President of the Republic of Colombia, His Excellency Mr. Óscar Adolfo Naranjo. I would like to convey to him and to President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón my country's appreciation for the tireless efforts they have devoted to bringing about lasting peace in Colombia. I would also like to convey my gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, Mr. Jean Arnault, for his presence with us today and for his succinct briefing. We also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and detailed report (S/2017/1117) on the situation in Colombia published on 27 December 2017.

Equatorial Guinea welcomes the successful progress in the peace process under way in Colombia among the country's various social and politicial stakeholders. That success is due to the determination exhibited both by the national authorities, led by President Santos Calderón, and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). We would also like to underscore the courage shown by the entire Colombian people in facing the situation and, in favour of peace, taking the steps to leave behind more than five long decades of conflict. We feel particularly sensitive to the situation in that brotherly country due to the historic ties that link us as a result of our common Hispanic cultural heritage.

The high-level ceasefire agreement and the Final Peace Agreement on ending the conflict and building a stable and lasting peace between the Colombian Government and FARC-EP is the best example in that the national peace process is making satisfactory progress and has undoubtedly served as a source of inspiration and positive encouragement for the peace talks begun between the Colombian Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, which has created the conditions conducive to, and exciting expectations of, the realization of comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in Colombia.

In that regard, Equatorial Guinea endorses and welcomes the unanimous adoption resolution 2381 (2017) by the Security Council on 5 October 2017 and supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General on how the United Nations can best support the Mission charged with monitoring the temporary ceasefire between the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and the Colombian Government. The resolution allows all members of the Security Council to provide the necessary support to the work of the Verification Mission in the process of monitoring the ceasefire, which undoubtedly represents a very important measure in building the necessary trust between the parties. We hope it will lead to definitive and lasting peace, which would allow that brotherly country to make the most of all its immense potential.

While significant progress has been made, significant challenges remain, such as the effective reintegration of former guerrillas and the adaptation and approval of legislative initiatives to allow for the effective reinsertion and participation of former combatants in political, economic and social life of the country. To achieve that end, a positive approach and contribution by all parties involved is crucial. The judicial, political and legislative authorities have a decisive role to play, both in tackling present challenges and in preventing them from recurring in the course of the process. In that regard, I recall the remarks of His Holiness Pope Francis on 7 September 2017 in Bogotá, during his visit to Colombia:

> "Despite obstacles, differences and varying perspectives on the way to achieve peaceful coexistence, this task summons us to persevere in the struggle to promote a culture of encounter."

The ultimate success of the peace process in Colombia will depend in large part upon all parties involved in the negotiations respecting their commitments, including those not covered by the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. We therefore appeal to the political goodwill of all parties in that regard.

I cannot conclude my statement without once again expressing our gratitude to all those components of Colombian society that have made it possible for us today to speak of peace in Colombia, while also underscoring the role of the Catholic Church and also the invaluable support of a number of countries of the subregion.

I end by expressing my thanks to our friend Matthew for his warmth and the new life he breathed into the work of the Security Council, as well as my thanks for his support to my country in its first period serving as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. We wish him the greatest of success in his future endeavours.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Kazakhstan.

I would like to begin by welcoming to the Security Council His Excellency Vice-President Óscar Naranjo of Colonbia. We would also like him to convey our best regards to President Santos Calderón, whom we met during the Security Council mission to Colombia, as well as our appreciation for his courage and commitment to the peace process. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arnault for his comprehensive briefing and to commend the contribution made by him and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia to the implementation of the Peace Agreement.

It is more than a year since the Government of Colombia and the Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) signed a historic peace deal ending more than half a century of armed conflict. We have now entered the second year of the Colombian peace process, which is a milestone achievement — not only for the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP, but also for the entire international community. However, we still have a long way ahead, and we are all aware of the challenges they face.

As Under-Secretary-General Feltman rightly indicated during his visit to Colombia, there is a sense of growing concern about how the peace process has been evolving over the past several months. At the same time, we truly appreciate the frank assessment and acknowledgement by the Government of Colombia of the existing difficulties and its sincere and firm stand on the irreversibility of the peace process.

Yet some shortcomings in reintegration activities still persist that might jeopardize effective realization of the peace process. Both the Government and the FARC-EP have to do their best to ensure a proper reintegration process in order to prevent former combatants from being recruited by dissident groups or former rivals. In order to avoid the undermining of public confidence, it is essential to strengthen the security-development nexus, especially in former FARC-EP territories long-affected by the armed conflict.

We reiterate our firm commitment to the Colombian peace process and look forward to the overall implementation of the peace-related legislative agenda, including reforms and all other necessary constitutional amendments and provisions to address the challenges of peacebuilding.

We regret that the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) has resumed its attacks and missed the opportunity to amplify the truth. However, Kazakhstan still hopes that the Colombian Government and the ELN will ultimately find a way to extend the ceasefire. We fully support Colombia in its endeavour to ensure the complete elimination of the half-century war and move towards fostering reconciliation. The very fact that the Colombian Government and the FARC are united in their determinaiton to end the conflict and bring about peace allows us to remain optimistic that subsequent stages in the peace process have no option but to succeed. Kazakhstan absolutely supports all those efforts.

In conclusion, I join my colleagues in the Council who spoke very warmly about the professional and personal qualities of the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Mr. Matthew Rycroft, and stated that he will be missed here. We wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Council.

I give the floor to the Vice-President of Colombia.

Mr. Naranjo (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): After a year of implementing the agreement that ended the armed conflict with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), the Government of Colombia has come to the Security Council with the belief that that milestone in the history of peace is the best piece of news our citizens received and that our country conveyed to the world during the latter half of the previous century.

It is for that reason that we begin by thanking the United Nations and the Security Council for their effective support and dedication to peacebuilding efforts in our country, through its Special Verification Mission in the areas of reincorporation and security guarantees. We thank Special Representative Jean Arnault for his professionalism, effective work and leadership as the Head of the Mission. We would also like to thank Ambassador Matthew Rycroft for his commitment and dedication to the peace process in Colombia. With his peers present, we reiterate that we never will we forget him for his efforts in bringing about peace in Colombia.

Today, I would like my statement, in my capacity as the Vice-President of Colombia and representative of President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, to be viewed

as the manifestation of a vision brought forth by the efforts of various generations that sought peace. We are now building and ensuring such peace. As an officer of the Colombian armed forces, I witnessed at first hand the tragedies caused by a war that lasted many years. I attended the funerals of many civil servants and innocent Colombians. There were 240,000 violent deaths caused by the conflict and more than 8 million victims throughout the decades. Today I am pleased to inform the Council that the peace process was effective and allowed the lives of at least 3,000 people to be spared in the last year alone after the agreement was signed. That is without a doubt another piece of good news.

Based on an assessment of the implementation of the agreement one year after it was signed, we can state without hesitation that the peacebuilding process is progressing in structural terms and that the agreement has been an effective covenant for ending the war and silencing the guns. As the Council knows, we have been able to develop an effective process of laying down of weapons, which heralded the end of the FARC as an armed organization and its transformaton into a political party. To meet the new challenges of the post-conflict and peacebuilding era, we have established various Government institutions and rolled out mechanisms for interaction and coordination that have enabled us to respond to the challenge we face.

Over the past year, the legislative agenda of the Congress of the Republic of Colombia led to the adoption of six pieces of legislation that introduced constitutional reforms and various laws and decrees including more than 100 norms and decrees, which laid the foundation for peacebuilding in our country.

Let me now mention the progress made in the areas of reintegration and security guarantees, which are included in the Mission's mandate. With regard to reintegration, I must underscore that Colombia has more than 14 years of experience. More than 50,000 Colombians have passed through our programmes, who left criminal organizations and reintegrated into society. We can therefore safely state that our country can serve as a model in that area. That experience is the starting point for ensuring the reintegration of the FARC's former combatants. We now have 12,848 former combatants involved in the process, of whom — and this is very important — 11,362 already receive a basic monthly stipend. We have sought to provide literacy and primary and secondary education courses in the territorial areas for training and reincorporation. More than 5,000 people were involved in the first phase of the initiative — former combatants and members of local communities alike.

To facilitate reincorporation, Ecomun was established. It is the main cooperative for former members of the FARC, which is now a political party. Forty-two other cooperative organizations have been established through a special system for former combatants. We established the National Reincorporation Council and 26 territorial councils to coordinate reincorporation efforts from the local to the national level. At the same time, there has been a major change in the political sphere, with FARC elements disappearing as an armed organization and now becomig a new political party that will take part in the upcoming parliamentary elections in March. It has already decided to field a presidential candidate.

With regard to security, we think it essential to inform the Council that 2017 was the least violent year in Colombia in the past 42 years, with the lowest murder rate recorded in four decades. That is another piece of good news. Sadly, it is true that people linked to the former FARC organization, community leaders and human rights defenders have been murdered. Nonetheless, during the negotiations, in order to end the conflict, we were careful to design new institutions and mechanisms that ensure that life and personal integrity would always be protected. To protect former FARC combatants in particular, 160 protection schemes have been approved and more than 800 former combatants have been included and trained to serve jointly in inter-agency bodies alongside State staff in personal protection services.

I would like to reassure the Council that the Government shares public concerns about the murder of former FARC combatants, community leaders and human rights defenders. We do not deny the situation. We acknowledge and highlight it. However, we are taking action and hope to do so with determination and efficiency. The President himself chairs the National Commission for Security Guarantees, in which civil society, the public prosecutor's office, the office of the ombusdman and other members of the Government take part, in order to assess and take decisions on security-related issues. Such efforts have enabled us to accelerate investigations undertaken to combat impunity and ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

We believe that we must not only work on speeding up investigations, but also on the prevention of such acts. To that end, we have designed and implemented a new prevention and rapid reaction system for the regions, which, with the help of the Ombudsman's Office, seeks to ramp up a preventive capacity that will truly allow us to prevent the violent deaths of social leaders. Here before the Security Council, I can affirm that, as we have done in the past in order to combat organized crime that has emerged from drug trafficking, we will not let up in our efforts to overcome such networks.

My presence here today coincides with the strategic decision taken by my counry's President to move forward the consolidation of a secure and peaceful Colombia. Plan Victory, implemented by the military forces, and the safe communities and peace plan of the national police have just been overhauled so as to respond comprehensively in neutralizing any type of violence in the country reported by Colombians. Over the next several days beginning now, we will be deploying approximatley 80,000 soldiers and police officers whose duties will be focused on controlling territory abandoned by the FARC so that it is not taken over by any criminal entity.

Lastly, the President of Colombia wishes to acknowledge that he has received and taken due note of the first report (S/2017/1117) of United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, and, at the same time, reaffirms his resolve and full commitment to comply with the Final Peace Agreement. We are certain that the historic achievement of ending the conflict will prevail over obstacles and major challenges inherent in its implementation.

We regret and genuinely deplore recent events, but the Council must know that the Government has maintained a willingness to pursue a negotiation process with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional in order to extend the bilateral ceasefire in order to allow us to make progress, pursue dialogue and bring to fruition the Peace Agreement. Inexplicably, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional has not only rejected the good-will gestures of the Government, but it has also failed to consider the appeals of the Catholic Church, non-governmental organizations, academics and the international community to continue talks and relaunch a ceasefire that would ensure its sustainability. Nevertheless, I reaffirm before the Council that the Government will not waver in its mission to bring about peace — given that peace is the expression of the collective will that must prevail over concrete acts.

Accordingly, the events of the past few hours and minutes have led the chief Colombian negotiator to consult with the President to assess the situation, and under no circumstances will we ever abandon a goal that is of the utmost importance to our Government, which has unequivocally demonstrated to the entire world that its leader, the President of the Republic, is a champion of peace, peacemaker and peacebuilder.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.55 p.m.